



REFLECTIONS

on a Mission



2012 Annual Report
North Carolina State Rehabilitation Council

Our cover photos are of former N.C. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services consumers on the job: (l to r) Timothy Dingle, owner and operator of Dingle Transport in Kinston; Christinia Smith, a rehabilitation counselor with NCDVRS Wilmington; and DeWayne Coons, an information technology support technician at Graystone Eye in Hickory.



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Message from the Chair

On behalf of the North Carolina State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and those we serve, I would like to thank you for your support of and interest in North Carolina's vocational rehabilitation services during 2012. It has been an active year for the council as we continue to fulfill our statutory responsibilities and roles as advocates for the rehabilitation needs of North Carolinians with disabilities.

During 2012, the council remained committed to the development and implementation of North Carolina's state plan and the triennial Comprehensive Needs Assessment. The consumer satisfaction survey was sent out monthly and two public forums were held in the western and central regions of the state. You will find the council's participation in these areas detailed in this report.

The council was also active in statewide conferences aimed at conducting public outreach and the annual legislative breakfast to promote awareness of vocational rehabilitation services and the SRC.



Davan Cloninger

The SRC's work continues to be guided by the four goals in our strategic plan:

- ▶ To advocate for adequate services and the community supports necessary for an individual to be successful in a program of services;
- ▶ To assist the DVRS with establishing goals and strategies to effectively address the needs identified by the triennial Comprehensive Needs Assessment;
- ▶ To inform all stakeholders of the role of the SRC and its advocacy efforts; and
- ▶ To enhance the SRC's knowledge of the needs of all of its stakeholders.

I am pleased to report on the work and accomplishments of the council and its committees this year. I would like to thank the council members for their dedication as advocates for all North Carolinians with disabilities.

Davan Cloninger, Chair
North Carolina State Rehabilitation Council

The Mission of the Council

To enhance the employment, independent living and equality of individuals with disabilities in the state of North Carolina.

The Purpose of the Council

- ▶ To advise and work in partnership with the N.C. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (NCDVRS).
- ▶ To assist the division in accomplishing its charge to promote employment and independence for people with disabilities through customer partnerships and community leadership.
- ▶ To provide guidance, input and recommendations relative to the development and expansion of vocational rehabilitation services and programs in an effort to maximize employment opportunities and independence for individuals with disabilities
- ▶ To advocate for legislation that supports individuals with disabilities in making successful transitions into the workforce and the community.
- ▶ To provide customers and stakeholders of vocational rehabilitation services with a formal mechanism to influence policy and the direction of NCDVRS at the highest administrative level of the state.

The Year by the Numbers

- ▶ NCDVRS services helped 6,758 consumers achieve successful employment outcomes.
- ▶ Independent living objectives were achieved by 1,782 Independent Living program participants.
- ▶ The N.C. Assistive Technology Program provided 6,737 individuals with equipment loans or demonstrations.
- ▶ Disability Determination Services closed 225,219 cases involving Social Security Disability, Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid Disability benefits.
- ▶ Supported employment services resulted in 1,023 individuals achieving their employment objectives.



Christinia Smith
Wilmington

N.C. State Rehabilitation Council Objectives

1. To carry out the following, after consulting with the state's Workforce Development Board: review, analyze, and advise the Designated State Agency (DSA) regarding the performance of the Designated State Unit (DSU) under this Title, particularly with responsibilities related to eligibility (including order of selection); extent, scope, and effectiveness of the services provided; and functions performed by state agencies that affect the ability of individuals with disabilities in achieving outcomes under this Title.
2. To carry out the following in partnership with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DSU): develop, agree to, and review state goals, and provide in accordance with Section 101(a)(15)(C); evaluate the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program; and submit reports of the progress to the Commissioner in accordance with Section 101(a) (15) (E).
3. To advise the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (DSA) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DSU) regarding activities authorized to be carried out under this Title and assist in the preparation of the State Plan and amendments to the Plan, applications, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations required by this Title.
4. To the extent possible, conduct reviews and analysis of the effectiveness of, and consumer satisfaction with, the functions of the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services: the vocational rehabilitation services provided by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and other public and private entities responsible for providing services to individuals with disabilities under the Act; and the employment outcomes achieved by eligible individuals receiving services under the Act, including the availability of health and other employment benefits in connection with such employment outcomes.
5. To prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor and the Commissioner of RSA on the status of the vocational rehabilitation programs operating within the state and to make this report available to the public.
6. To avoid duplication of efforts and to enhance the number of individuals served.
7. Coordinate with the activities of other councils within the state, including: the Statewide Independent Living Council; the advisory panel established under Section 612(a) (21) of the Individuals with Disabilities Act Amendments of 1997; the state Council on Developmental Disabilities; the state Mental Health Planning Council; the state Workforce Investment Board; and other public and private organizations, groups, and functions such as the Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation, the National Rehabilitation Association, and the N.C. Rehabilitation Association.
8. To provide for coordination and to establish working relationships between the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services and the Statewide Independent Living Council and the centers for independent living in the state.
9. To perform other functions consistent with the purposes of this Title comparable to other functions performed by the council.

NCSRC Standing Committees

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee acts on behalf of the council consistent with the council's purpose as outlined in its bylaws. The committee is responsible for compiling the council's response to the state plan and triennial Comprehensive Needs Assessment, preparing the annual report, establishing meeting agendas, and setting the general direction of the council and its committees.

In order to further expand SRC participation in the development and implementation of the state plan, the council's Executive Committee addresses state plan development, implementation, and progress towards plan goals and SRC goals within the "Goals, Priorities and Strategies" section of the plan during monthly meetings with the NCDVRS director. The Executive Committee, along with the division's Planning and Evaluation Section, reports on the state plan to the full council at each quarterly meeting for their input and approval.

During its monthly meetings, the Executive Committee continues to work with the Planning and Evaluation Section on the development and implementation of the triennial Comprehensive Needs Assessment. The committee and section staff report back to the full council on the needs assessment at each quarterly meeting for their input and approval. The Executive Committee also maintains responsibility for developing the agendas for the quarterly full council meetings.

In 2012 on behalf of the full council, SRC Chair Davan Cloninger drafted a letter to key legislators for their consideration in changing the state mileage reimbursement rate for members of boards, commissions and councils. The council discussed support for the "Employment First Initiative" which emphasizes employment as the preferred outcome. An independent steering committee was formed to work on a resolution to present to the N.C. General Assembly.

Members also worked with agency staff on developing reports to legislators highlighting the VR program's return on investment. Each report was customized to legislative districts and included success stories of individuals benefiting from the VR program. With the increased demand in client appeals, members provided input into the process of attracting more hearing officers. A training class for potential hearing officers is expected to be conducted in FFY13.

To promote outreach and foster relationships with community business leaders, members participated in statewide activities that included attending the N.C. Rehabilitation Association's annual legislative breakfast. At the event, members of the General Assembly heard personal-achievement stories from people with disabilities. SRC members also attended the NCAPSE Spring Conference and N.C. Business Leadership Network Conferences.

Chair-Elect Dennis Troy joined SRC members from other states at a two-day national State Rehabilitation Council Leadership Training Conference held in conjunction with the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation.

The Executive Committee carefully reviews the nominations of prospective members and encourages new members to serve on designated committees to provide a more balanced representation.

The committee published a commercially printed and an electronic annual report for distribution to the public and key partners. The report summarizes the work of the council and highlights essential components of its mission, such as consumer satisfaction.

Copies were distributed to consumers, state legislators, local VR offices, other states' VR programs, other state rehabilitation councils, rehabilitation-counseling graduate programs and interested community stakeholders.

Consumer Input and Public Outreach Committee

The Consumer Input and Public Outreach Committee reviews, analyzes and makes recommendations to the council on the effectiveness of rehabilitation services delivered by NCDVRS and other public and private agencies in the state.

The committee also gathers information using the consumer satisfaction survey, public forums and feedback from the Client Assistance Program. The committee accomplished several consumer-input tasks and continued to monitor the methods and strategies for input and outreach for 2012. The intent was to increase the voice of consumers and the public regarding the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services, thereby strengthening the quality of services for the citizens of North Carolina. Committee members advocated for sharing consumer satisfaction survey feedback with field offices to improve customer service. The information was distributed to unit managers and posted on the agency's internal website.

At the committee's recommendation, the division also expanded its methods of obtaining feedback on consumer satisfaction by making the survey available through a website address provided with the written survey. Successful telephone surveys were conducted by retaining North Carolina State University's Center for Urban Affairs to contact 500 non-responders to the written survey.

In addition to the survey, the committee, with full council participation, focused on gathering input through public forums. The two forums, held in Morganton and Greensboro, allowed consumers, providers, employers, stakeholders and staff to express concerns and highlight how services have or have not met existing needs.

The committee intends to use the feedback from these forums as a guide in the development of the statewide needs assessment and agency policies and procedures and in formulating goals and strategies in the 2013 and 2014 State Plans.



DeWayne Coons
Hickory

Policy and Rules Review Committee

The Policy and Rules Review Committee reviews and makes recommendations relating to division policy and procedures that affect the public, are subject to public rule-making hearings under the state's Administrative Procedures Act, or both.

In the past year, the committee provided feedback on: policy revisions, transition-age student application, telecommunicative and assistive devices, durable medical equipment, self-employment services, internships, case transfers and unit manager approvals, staff use of social media, personal assistance services, displacement prevention procedure and money-follows-the-person policy revisions.

Members were informed on the implementation phases of the new BEAM case management system for which user acceptance testing was being conducted in two field offices. Further implementation is expected in FFY13.

Community Outreach, Advocacy, Member Development

This year the council's goal has been to have greater impact on its mandates in the areas of community outreach, advocacy and SRC member development.

Liaison Activities

The council continues its involvement with seven liaison groups that require SRC involvement, as well as special interest groups. There are council members who are designated to serve as council representatives. The council continues to focus on identifying potential members who can effectively liaise with some of the groups. Involvement is seen as a critical opportunity to partner with key stakeholders, as well as provide strategic paths for community outreach, advocacy, and SRC member development. The seven groups are:

- ▶ Council on Education Services for Exceptional Children
- ▶ Mental Health Planning Council
- ▶ N.C. Substance Abuse Federation
- ▶ N.C. Council on Developmental Disabilities
- ▶ N.C. Statewide Independent Living Council
- ▶ N.C. Commission on Workforce Development
- ▶ Commission for Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse

Public Forums

To obtain consumer input beyond the satisfaction survey and e-mail links via the division's website, the council conducted two public forums, in the central and western regions of the state. During the March 22 forum at Guilford Technical Community College in Greensboro, consumers commented on their successes with internships and job searches. Two issues aired were wait times for completing assessments and the need for assistance with setting up small businesses.

On September 20, at the VR WorkSource West facility in Morganton, audience members voiced concern over the lack of access to adequate transportation in rural parts of the state. Consumers reported being deterred from pursuing service-industry jobs because of varied work schedules with no available transportation. Deaf consumers felt their skills were being overlooked by potential employers because of the nature of their disability and the skills of interpreters assisting them during interviews.

Parents expressed concern that their adult children with autism, even though they may have advanced degrees, lack the proper interviewing skills. Also discussed were overcoming the stigma around criminal background checks and the need to better inform the public, especially transition-age students, about VR services.

The following day, the full council met and discussed ways to address the topics that emerged. Also, regional division staff was invited to share issues, concerns and accomplishments. The forum continues to serve as a valuable way to obtain consumer input and increase awareness of the SRC's advocacy role in ensuring that the needs of the consumer and agency are met.

SRC Member Training

Council members were notified of opportunities to participate in on-line training series specific to state rehabilitation councils and webinars such as the "Disability Employment Initiative."

Through attendance at full council meetings, members were able to engage in discussions with guest speakers about: business leadership programs throughout N.C., collaborations between the Veteran's Administration and vocational rehabilitation services programs, and the challenges facing the N.C. Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substances Abuse Services' delivery system. Members also engaged in interactive demonstrations of devices offered through the N.C. Assistive Technology Program.

Further education was provided through presentations on: the Client Assistance Program's services and the federal requirements affecting that program, the restructuring of the VR Counselor Advisory Committee and the merger of the Employment Security Commission with the N.C. Department of Commerce's Division of Workforce Solutions.

The division's self-employment program was reviewed with a focus on the program's success in helping individuals with disabilities achieve their goal of owning a business.

A discussion of the North Carolina Employment First Initiative focused on the importance of employment that values ability rather than being distracted by a person's disability.

Members were educated about the AmeriCorps NC program which encourages people with disabilities to apply skills and build relationships through volunteering. The program assists with employment, tutoring and mentoring youth, and assisting seniors in a number of ways in their communities.

Review and Analysis of the Client Satisfaction Survey

The consumer satisfaction survey is mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, which requires the State Rehabilitation Council to conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of and client satisfaction with:

- ▶ the functions performed by the designated state agency;
- ▶ vocational rehabilitation services provided by state agencies and other public and private entities responsible for providing vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under the act;
- ▶ and employment outcomes achieved by eligible individuals receiving services under this title, including the availability of health and other employment benefits in connection with such employment outcomes.

The survey is conducted in cooperation with NCDVRS staff which contracts with a community rehabilitation program to prepare and mail the survey and with the NCSU Center for Urban Affairs and Community Services to conduct telephone interview surveys.

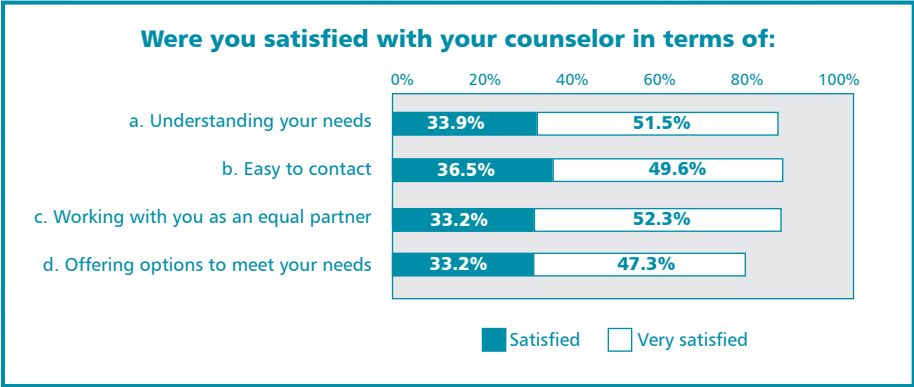
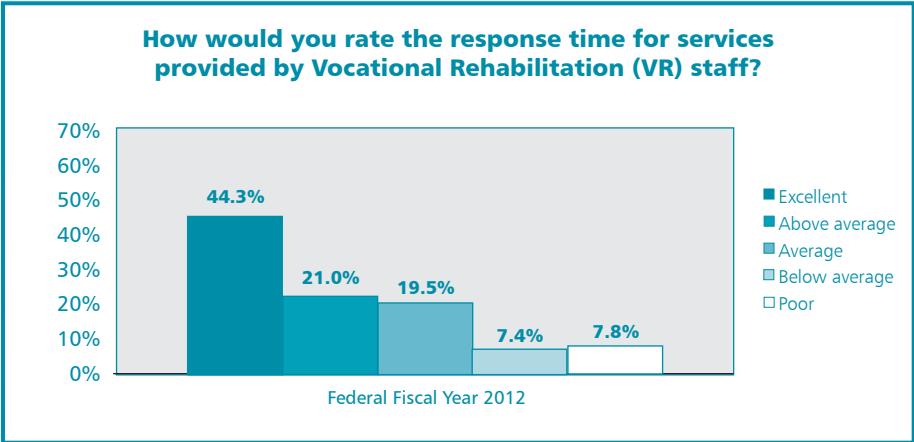
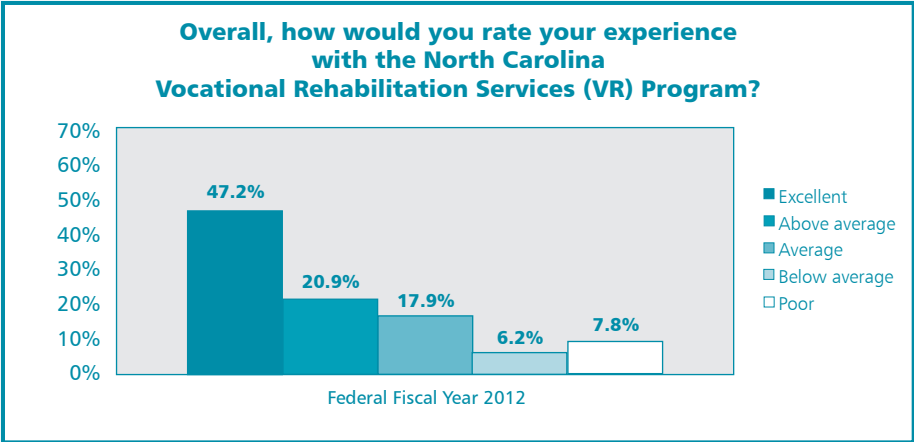
During FFY12, 11,586 survey forms were sent to former division consumers who were either successfully rehabilitated in employment or not successfully rehabilitated. These consumers also received letters explaining why they were asked to respond and offering assurances that responses would be confidential. A toll-free number was provided for any assistance needed. The survey was also made available in alternative formats, including an on-line version.

Of the forms sent out: 1,260 surveys were completed and returned, 10 were completed on-line and 534 telephone surveys were completed. Of the 1,804 responses, 1,300 (72%) were from consumers whose cases had closed successfully. The adjusted response rate for successful case closures (21.3%) was 1.7 times greater than that of unsuccessful closures (12.5%). There were 1,463 mail-outs returned because of incorrect mailing addresses. Adjusted for returned surveys, including telephone responses, the response rate of 17.8% is the highest in the past five years of surveys.

Overview of Satisfaction Survey

Printed in English, the survey's nine closed-end questions were designed to measure the consumer's experience with the state vocational rehabilitation program and to specifically determine if the consumer: had received information about the Client Assistance Program, had been informed of his or her right to appeal division decisions, and was satisfied with his or her rehabilitation counselor and involvement in the rehabilitation program. The survey also sought to determine what factors had prevented a consumer from obtaining employment and who had completed the survey — the actual consumer with or without help, a family member or a caregiver.

The following charts reflect the 2012 survey’s aggregate responses on three critical parameters of consumer satisfaction.



Recommendations Related to the 2013 N.C. Vocational Rehabilitation Plan

The Executive Committee provided input to the division on the progress of the 2012 state plan goals as well as the development of the 2013 State Plan. The council recommended the following to the division relating to the identification of goals, priorities or strategies for FFY13:

Recommendation: Based upon the success of telephone-based surveys in FFY10, the council recommends expanding their use and places high priority on making available the financial resources needed to significantly improve the response rate of the consumer satisfaction survey.

Division's Response: The division implemented a contract with a third-party organization commencing in April 2012 that will require the contractor to conduct telephone-based consumer-satisfaction surveys with 500 consumers who did not respond to the paper-based surveys. A web-based survey is also operational, and consumers are notified of this option through materials mailed out with the paper-based surveys.

Recommendation: In support of its strategic plan pertaining to legislative advocacy, the council recommends that the division prepare to distribute customized reports for each legislative district, specifying the return on investment that NCDVRS has produced with consumers for each district's economy. A subsequent recommendation was made to make this information available to all unit offices via the division's intranet.

Division's Response: The division supported this request, revised the customized reports and added consumer success stories to provide a more human element to the data. All requested reports were generated again this year for their distribution to all N.C. legislators. This information was also made available to unit offices via the division's intranet.

Recommendation: To sustain the momentum of the previous two years in the division's development of self-employment services, policies and procedures, the council recommended that the ARRA-funded small-business specialist position be converted to a permanent status if resources allowed.

Division's Response: The division supported this recommendation by reallocating a vacant, permanent position that was filled by a qualified small-business specialist. This individual provides direct support services to staff and consumers and closely collaborates with partners offering financial and technical-support services to individuals who are interested in pursuing self-employment.

Recommendation: The council recommends that the division review the intake/eligibility determination process to maximize consumers' understanding of what is required to receive services and what they can do to expedite the intake process.

Division's Response: The division will continue to review this process as it implements the new electronic case-management system and evaluates further adjustments through the work of a committees established to facilitate progress on FFY 12-14 goals.

Recommendation: To enable members to participate in council meetings to the greatest extent possible, the council has recommended that the division explore alternative meeting methods, such as members' using remote call-in or other remote-access media.

Division's Response: The division supports this recommendation and is working with council members to identify technological solutions that will enable their remote participation.

Recommendation: The council recommends that a subcommittee more closely analyze the consumer satisfaction rate of consumers in the central region as compared with the western and eastern regions.

Division's Response: The division will support the subcommittee with a more detailed analysis of the differences in satisfaction rates between regions.

Recommendation: The council recommends that the council and the division conduct joint sessions twice annually to collect consumer input from communities across the state.

Division's Response: The division will continue to support joint sessions twice annually, canvassing communities about perceptions of how the VR program is addressing their needs through its services.

Recommendation: The council recommends that the division support ongoing collaboration with the Statewide Independent Living Council in their exploration of how people with disabilities can achieve financial independence within current systems of support and how the those systems might be changed to better facilitate independence.

Division's Response: The division will continue to enthusiastically support this collaborative effort and systematic assessment.

Recommendation: The council recommends that the division support continued development of rigorous training standards for employing specialists, job coaches and their supervisory staff members.

Division's Response: During FFY13, rules pertaining to the strengthening of these standards are expected to be put into place, pending approval and routing through channels required by the N.C. Administrative Procedures Act.

The Members of the North Carolina State Rehabilitation Council: 2011-12

Davan Cloninger Chair	Disability Advocacy Groups
Dennis Troy Vice Chair	Disability Advocacy Groups
Laurie Ray	State Education Agency (IDEA)
Stephanie Lusk	Non-Division Rehabilitation Counselors
Lisa Ward-Ross	Community Rehabilitation Service Providers
Celeste Hunt	Directors of Projects Under Section 121
Robert Gilmore	NCDVRS Consumers
John Marens	Client Assistance Program (CAP)
Horace Hunt	Business and Industry Sector
Keely Roberts	Business and Industry Sector
Jason Reynolds	Disability Advocacy Groups
Charlie DesLaurier	Statewide Independent Living Council
Carol Walker	Regional Rehabilitation Centers for the Physically Disabled
Doreen Byrd	Parent Training & Information Centers
Brenda Savage	N.C. Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Solutions
Ping Holt Miller	N.C. Chamber of Commerce
Trish Hussey	Disability Advocacy Groups
Vacant	Labor

Non-Voting Members

Linda Harrington,	Director, NCDVRS
Jacqueline Tetterton	Counselor Advisory Committee, NCDVRS

2012 Meeting Schedule

- | | |
|-------------------|------------|
| ▶ March 22-23 | Greensboro |
| ▶ June 7-8 | Raleigh |
| ▶ September 20-21 | Morganton |
| ▶ December 6-7 | Raleigh |

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N.C. State Rehabilitation Council

c/o N.C. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

2801 Mail Service Center | Raleigh, NC 27699-2801

(919) 855-3500 | 1-800-689-9090 | TTY (919) 855-3579

Fax (919) 733-7968 | www.ncdhhs.gov/dvrs

State of North Carolina | Pat McCrory, Governor
Department of Health and Human Services | Aldona Z. Wos, M.D., Secretary
www.ncdhhs.gov

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